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## Memory as Protest: Mediating Memories of Violence and the Bread Riots in the Rif

*Norah Karrouche*

When in 2011 Moroccans took to the streets of cities large and small in their country as part of a series of popular protests, international media were quick to view these as part of the so-called Arab Spring that had started to sweep the larger North Africa and Middle-East region. However, protesters in predominantly Berber-speaking regions in the country disagreed with these international media, as activists inscribed themselves into a history of local activism that, according to them, constituted a Berber activism. Moroccan-Berber activism denotes a form of cultural, social, and political activism that opposes the politics of ethnic and cultural categorization and assimilation in both Morocco and the diaspora. It arose during the 1960s in cities located in the center and south of the country, but not in the north. One Berber cultural association (al-Intilaqa) was founded in the region in 1978, but was shut down by the authorities in 1981 (Kratochwil 2002). During the 1980s, there were no Berber cultural-associations in the Rif. In 1990, activists

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founded Ilmas in Nador, and other associations quickly followed, also in Al Hoceima. They were established by alumni from the universities of Fez and Oujda who had previously been involved in Marxist-Leninist or pan-Arabist student associations. They organized cultural festivals, performed plays and poetry readings in Tarifit, and organized conferences and debates on political themes such as democracy and human rights. They often cooperated with the human rights organization AMDH. From 1995 on, the number of associations in the Rif significantly increased, but they have remained rather isolated from the national Berber cause in Morocco. In this sense, we may speak of a certain Rifian regionalism within Berber activism (Kratochwil 2002).

In 2011, Berber activists in the Rif claimed to be taking part in a Berber Spring, not an Arab one. In so doing, these local protesters in Al Hoceima, Imzouren, and Nador—the main Berber activist centers in northern Morocco—were referencing episodes of violence that had taken place in the Rif in the recent past. In this chapter, I focus on this particular geographical area in Morocco that, during the twentieth century, has stood out as a region because of its violent past, which includes anti-colonial resistance during the 1920s, the 1958–1959 uprisings, and the Bread Riots of the 1980s. This shared memory of violence among Berber activists has been communicated via oral, print, and social media and has very much been tied to the idea of regional autonomy as Rifians, and cultural authenticity as Berbers or Imazighen. Moreover, these memories inform a specific future for the region for which several generations of activists share responsibility. The notion of human rights and democratization informs a claim to a recovery of “truth” and “history” in the Rif.

This chapter aims to show how such local memories of war and violence in the northern Rif region have shaped the identities and agencies of several generations of Berber activists in both Morocco and its diaspora, including an emerging generation of young activists in the diaspora. It details the life stories and protest activities of the activists who were remediating memories of social protest and state violence in the Rif during their ongoing protests in 2011, by framing the “Arab Spring” as a “Berber Spring.” On a theoretical level, this chapter addresses questions of traumatic memory, victimization, and generativity. It furthermore demonstrates in what ways notions of human rights, democratization, and cultural authenticity inform a local claim to the recovery of political autonomy and cultural identity that is conceived to be very different from state-centered authority and Arab (and Islamic) identity.

## MEMORY FROM/OF THE RIF

When in March 2011 one of the respondents in my research on Berber activism in northern Morocco and its diaspora was preparing a trip to Morocco to participate in street protests in Al Hoceima, I started to reconsider the effects of memories of violence that had been passed on to younger generations of Moroccans in the diaspora. Yacine was a young man in his early twenties, born, raised, and residing in the Dutch city of Utrecht, where he had been involved with a Berber cultural association for a couple of years. Following this, he became acquainted with the founders of several other Berber associations in the Netherlands through their network. Yacine's life trajectory is similar to those of other younger members, the children and grandchildren of labor migrants who first came to the Netherlands in the 1960s and 1970s, what was called the "second generation" or "post-migrant generation" (Schiller and Fouron 2001). During adolescence, these post-migrants felt a need to explore their identities, which had been scrutinized in a public environment that was increasingly hostile to Islam and North African—Arab or Berber—(post-) migrants. In their search for information about their Islamic, Moroccan, and Berber roots, these youths had encountered Berber associations, primarily via the Internet. In the mid-1990s, several migrants from the Rif started to found Berber migrant-associations in the Netherlands, but these were not the first generation of labor migrants. They were highly educated "follow-up migrants" who arrived in the Netherlands in the 1990s through established migrant networks. Between 2008 and 2011, I collected the life stories of forty Berber activists based in Belgium and the Netherlands, while also conducting archival and ethnographic research on the past and contemporary practices of Berber activism in these countries. Most of the Berber activists I became acquainted with and interviewed during these years were indeed part of this generation of "follow-up migrants."

Most Moroccans in the Netherlands trace their roots back to the Rif. For instance, more than half of the 1969–1973 labor migrant cohorts originated from the Rif region (Fokkema and Harmsen 2009). Historically, the Rif had already been a sending region (De Haas 2009) prior to international migration to Europe. For instance, many Rifians ended up as workers in Algeria for French colonists. This pattern gradually extended to Western Europe in the immediate aftermath of decolonization. Several Western European economies, short of workers, signed bilateral agreements with Morocco to facilitate temporary migrant labor.

The large-scale migrations of predominantly Moroccan men to several Western European nation-states, so typical of the late 1960s and early 1970s, coincided with the establishment of the first Berber associations in Morocco's cities. Berber activists have been active predominantly in Rabat and Agadir. But Berber associations would remain absent in most European host societies until the early 1990s. In the Netherlands, youths like Yacine were not introduced to Berber activism through their parents or grandparents (the first generation of labor migrants), but through a generation of highly educated and male "follow-up migrants" whose subjectivities and agencies were shaped during adolescence in Morocco's politically tumultuous late 1970s and 1980s. Because they were Rifian, they also strived for regional autonomy for the Rif within Morocco. Precisely this message of regional autonomy was what led Yacine to participate in the "Berber Spring" in Al Hoceima.

In Berber associations in Morocco and abroad, a political agenda and a cultural ideal always went hand in hand: they wished to inscribe themselves into a political "modernity" and to adhere to "Western" values (Hoffman and Gilson Miller 2010, p. 9). To this day, this signifies adhering to democratic values, which they view as incompatible with Arab political regimes. These political values are tied up with historical representations and a cultural memory of a democratic, gender-neutral, and tolerant "Berber" throughout North African history. This emphasis on Western values might be seen as a political strategy to gain international recognition and support. In this sense, we can speak of "strategic essentialism" (Alcoff 2000, p. 320).

Yacine appropriated this image by taking on the name of a local resistance hero. Yacine was involved with the founders of such Berber and Rifian associations since his late teens. But by 2011, he had become wary of the secular affinities of most Berber migrant-activists and he deplored their lack of empathy with religious Dutch-Moroccan youth, who had grown up in a Dutch environment where Islam was not the norm but rather the exception, and had hence not been associated with state authority, as the founders of these associations had been. Yacine's engagement with Berber activist-thought had been shaped by this historical representation communicated to him by an older generation of activists during meetings and cultural festivals and that was also spreading local news about the "Berber Spring" in Al Hoceima through social media.

Even though he disagreed with these older activists on a few issues, this did not prevent him from engaging with Rifian-Berber activism's

political message of regional autonomy, and he proudly stated on social media his intention to travel to Morocco to participate in uprisings, undertook the actual trip, and, eventually, served a prison sentence in his parents' country of origin. It had struck me by then how Yacine, in undertaking these actions, was actively remembering the life experiences of older generations of activists who had all participated in the Bread Riots in northern Morocco in the 1980s. He was trying to live the life of those who had gone before him: the activists who had founded the associations and had passed on their individual memories of resisting central-state authority in the Rif. Some of these activists who had spent their adolescence in the Rif self-identified as heroes, others as victims of a political regime personified in the image of Hassan II. Yacine was actively seeking connection with this politically tumultuous and violent past by re-enacting it in a new political context, inscribing himself as it were into a tradition of violent resistance. Astrid Erll (2011), in particular, has stressed this unpredictable side of the social dimension of memory: not only is memory never fixed, it is also difficult to predict, when memories (or, in her words "memory matters") will be forgotten and when they will be actively and purposefully remembered: reactivated. This can be observed in Yacine's case.

But memory is always more than an individual's or a group's selective appropriation of the past or use of strategic essentialism. In the case of political or social activism, it can additionally be viewed as interplay between the past as it is remembered politically by state actors and the past as it is remembered socially by individuals and groups. Although we may remember individually, memory is always socially embedded: for instance, in the shared experiences of specific generations and in communities (Olick and Robbins 1998), such as the successive generations of Rifian activists and Rifian (diasporic) communities. Yacine was, in fact, attempting to inscribe himself into the shared experiences of older male activists. Sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel (2003) coined the term "mnemonic community" to address this social dimension of memory. Inevitably, individuals participate in multiple "mnemonic communities," at times overlapping and at times conflicting. As Kansteiner (2002, p. 188) argued, "Collective memories originate from shared communications about the meaning of the past that are anchored in the life-worlds of individuals who partake in the communal life of the respective collective." Autobiographical and collective memories influence each other equally and mutually. Several scholars (Bell 2003; Brockmeier 2010; Kansteiner 2002) have stressed this social and communicative dimension of memory.

As I have shown by now by telling Yacine's story, memory entails a specific appropriation of the past. Surely, there are many ways in which a single past might be interpreted and storied, producing "multiple pasts," as it were. Yet, the act of appropriation, the effort of fixation, provides individuals, groups, and generations with a sense of destiny and identity. As many would argue, the appropriation of the past is not past-oriented but rather both present- and future-oriented (Huyssen 2000). Kansteiner (2002, p. 182) stressed that memories are produced and appropriated by individuals capable of effecting change, agents "in history." Historical representation acts as a way to imbue the past with meaning and, thus, create a sense of place and belonging in the world, for now and tomorrow. Change is inherently tied to the way we think in the present about the past, and its representation is less fixed and stable than many activists themselves suggest.

### MEMORY, SILENCE, AND VIOLENCE

These observations seem to suggest that the past is not given as such, but is rather constructed in reference to the present and in light of current and future needs. In official national-history in particular, the future becomes authoritative for meaning making in the present. National histories, Duncan Bell (2003, p. 64) has argued, should therefore be studied as flexible interpretations of the past, produced in particular historical contexts, implying the ability to continuously change and re-invent the past. Precisely this malleability is clearly visible in the way state authorities and activists in the Rif have been dealing with the region's particularly violent history.

During the twentieth century, the northern Rif region was subject to three main episodes of violence that seem to continue to inform Rifian memory and subjectivity among activists as victims of history in Morocco and the diaspora today: the Rif Wars led by Abdelkrim al-Khat-tabi (1921–1926), the Rif Uprising (1958–1959), and the Bread Riots (1984–1987). To this day, the Rif Uprising that followed Morocco's independence from its colonizers, Spain and France, and was put down by the then Crown Prince Hassan II is at the core of this collective memory of violence in the area.

Following independence, local Rifian leaders—"tribesmen"—who had previously been granted administrative positions under Spanish administration were replaced by Moroccan administrators. The latter

had previously lived and worked in the French protectorate zone, and local Rifian leaders considered them a new “foreign” bourgeois elite.

In the aftermath of independence, the monarchy, the Arab nationalist Istiqlal, and local rural notables were battling to get the upper hand in the installment of a new post-independence regime. The Rifian leaders, previously under Spanish protection, became enmeshed in this setting during and after the battle for liberation. In 1956, authority over the region was transferred from the Armée de la Libération to the Forces Armées Royales. When one of the former leaders of the Armée de la Libération, the Rifian Abbes Messaadi, was purportedly murdered at the instigation of the Istiqlal, and Istiqlal personnel at the Ministry of Interior refused to allow his body to be returned to Ajdir, two party members of the newly founded rural Mouvement Populaire (MP) and former Rifian leaders within the Armée de la Libération were arrested. The population in both the previously Spanish and the previously French zone reacted en masse and at times even aimed its actions at local Istiqlal representatives. In response, the Istiqlal government created a special committee to investigate local grievances. Because the Rif had been neglected under Spanish supervision, the region lacked medical and education infrastructure. This was especially observed in the central and eastern departments. In addition, the border with French Algeria, on which the local economy depended so profoundly, had been closed. Unemployment, along with political and military administrative disorder, was soaring in these zones (Sater 2010, pp. 26–27; Seddon 1981, pp. 176–80).

Following the death of Messaadi in 1957 and the arrests of two MP party members, the rebellions intensified. Three Aith Waryaghar locals subsequently submitted a document to King Mohammed V, in which they presented their concerns and stipulated their political demands: a solution to end rocketing unemployment rates, heavy investment in local education, and the incorporation of local Rifian leaders in political affairs. All the while, riots were occurring, and the attempt at negotiating a way out of the crisis failed. In January 1959, the Armée Royale seized the harbor of Al Hoceima and told the rebels to put down their weapons before midday, January 7. The rebels did not respond to the royal call and *Moulay* (Crown Prince) Hassan ordered the military to crush the insurgence. According to



Seddon, the army numbered approximately twenty thousand, backed up by the Royal Air Force. The local population in Al Hoceima withdrew to the mountains, and the rebels surrendered at the end of January. When David Hart wrote *The Aith Waryagher of the Moroccan Rif* during the mid-1970s, full political integration of the Rif in the post-independence *makhzen* (the center of power) remained unattained (1976, pp. 426–32).

The Moroccan army, led by General Mohammed Oufkir and then Crown Prince Hassan, son of Mohammed V, severely and violently suppressed the uprisings that the local population later called the “year of the helmets.” It was followed by the Years of Lead: three decades of severe repression of all political opposition, accompanied by economic neglect, also of and in the Rif region, which eventually led to the 1984 and 1987 Bread Revolts in the areas of Al Hoceima, Nador, and Imzouren. Berber activists who participated in these revolts of the 1980s generally view this historical episode as the emergence of the Berber Movement in the Rif, even though associations only followed a decade later.

As we know, memory is equally about remembering and forgetting (Frijhoff 2011). Upon Mohammed VI’s ascent to the throne in 1999, a truth commission was installed in Morocco to cope with the wrongdoings that had occurred during the regime of Hassan II and the Years of Lead. The truth commission also intended to make amends with a painful past: a previously intentionally forgotten episode, the 1958–1959 uprisings, that had been erased from political memory and the neglect of human rights in Morocco. One particular sub-commission dealt with the violence suffered in the Rif.

To break radically with Hassan II’s violations, they chose 1999 as the end point of their mandate. Local Berber activists opposed the operations and results of the commission because they felt the state had not solved the human rights or regional autonomy issue in the Rif: violence was still ongoing. The activists challenged the narratives of 1958–1959. For instance, Aziz, a Berber activist in The Hague, clearly had a different approach to how historical justice and the right to history should be interpreted. His pathway to historical truth differs from that of the *makhzen*. The truth commission held a session in Al Hoceima in 2005. But, on November 7 and 8, 2008 in The Hague, Berber activists organized a commemoration for the victims of the ’58–’59 events:

And a general, a real general who worked out of the supervision in that circle, he told us last year in The Hague, not in public, at the fifty-year commemoration of the uprising of '58-'59 (silence) told us that he himself during the hearing of the truth commission in Rabat. He sat in a room, close to another room, and there someone was sitting from the army from back then, he himself was involved in the uprising, and he mentioned fifteen thousand victims as number. So someone says this. And what you get, so all hours, those hours are recorded, it concerns perhaps a thousand hours registered with victims, with family members, with people. They remain a state secret for sixty years. That can be opened after sixty years. So finding the truth in that Morocco (...) is an illusion. If we [i.e., Berber activists] speak about what is happening in Morocco, we do not speak superficially. We speak about, we speak with numbers, with facts, with clear language, no hidden agenda, transparency, and from a human, you could say, concern. And that file Rif, so with all effort, is among us, coded, so we obtain the codes of that file in broad terms. So that Rif thing is not just any case. That is coded. You must know these codes.

The Berber activists did not regard the past as being in the past. Instead, they observed continuity in the present.

But prior to 1999, different actors—the state and those upon whom the violence was committed—enacted two different kinds of silence: repressive forgetting and trauma or humiliated silence (Connerton 2008). Among the families of local Berber-activists, including those who eventually emigrated during the 1990s, the violent episodes were either fully silenced by those who suffered and subsequent generations, or spoken about in terms of a taboo. But increasingly, from the 1990s on, local activists felt that keeping silent about the atrocities of 1958–1959 was threatening the integrity of their local Rifian identity. They expected reparations.

Precisely the experience of suffering during the violent Years of Lead in the Rif is what binds together the older generation of local Berber activists, predominantly male intellectuals, artists, poets, and journalists who initiated Berber associations in the Rif. They deplored the silence of victims, often their own family members, on the one hand, and the lack of recognition from the Moroccan government, on the other. A trauma often implies one “forgets” and “erases” an experience from memory, but at the same time, the painful event is also remembered, by way of this urge to forget. Traumatic experience is felt as too painful to be admitted into individual consciousness and

to be shared either within the family, or in venues that are more public. Inclusion of the trauma in consciousness thus rather paradoxically recovers the sense of continuity, as it was never really lost. But it must be included in individual and collective narration (Ankersmit 2005, p. 318). It has been amply demonstrated that mass atrocities and war powerfully re-organize autobiographical memory (Brown et al. 2009). Acts of mass violence do not even have to be historically significant public events to have an impact on autobiographical memory. Rather, it is the personal significance accorded to these episodes that produces a “living-in-history” effect: individuals will use public events to date personal ones when the violence impacted an “epoch,” indicating that people’s lives changed significantly due to the experience of war and other forms of collective violence (p. 403).

Questions pertaining to the formation of generational memory—the collective memory that shapes a sense of generational identity and of belonging among these activists—thus concerns both the lived experience of 1984–1987 and the transmission of the trauma of 1958–1959. Self-ascriptions of belonging to “a generation” are constitutive of the ethnic group and nation as an imagined community, however small, in the face of small-scale elite activism, while guaranteeing its continuity. They literally *generate* (Giesen 2004, pp. 36–38). Though not representative of the totality of Berber activism on a global scale, they epitomize a tendency within diasporic activist space: “Les discours varient en fonction de son destinataire, du moment, du lieu et des contraintes propres à chaque situation” (Pouessel 2010, p. 101).<sup>1</sup>

## MEMORY AND HISTORY

But why did these local activists so strongly stress the need for reparation and remembrance of the violence suffered by their parents and grandparents in the Rif? Generations regenerate other and more distant memories of traumatic experiences that they themselves did not live through and are thus not embodied or corporeal. Marianne Hirsch (2008, pp. 103–28) has conceptualized this form of generational memory as “post-memory”: “(...) *a structure of inter- and transgenerational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience*” (p. 106).

During the period of 1984–1987, Rifian activists personally experienced violence in several locations in the Rif, predominantly in

Al Hoceima, Imzouren, and Nador. This particular generation of activists belongs to a late 1960s- and early 1970s-born cohort that witnessed and remembered specific events of violence (either as witnesses or as participants in local student movements during the Bread Riots) in the central and eastern Rif region.

During the mid-1970s and early 1980s, living standards in Arab countries severely declined. Pressured to participate in the international economy, Arab leaders implemented the Structural Adjustment Policies as favored by the International Monetary Fund. This not only increased food prices, but also indirectly caused unemployment and soaring housing shortages. In Morocco, such economic problems caused the protests that arose in January 1984. Though the term “Bread Riots” might elicit the association that their aims were limited to economic issues, uprisings have also proven to pertain to more symbolic issues, such as social and political protest against leaders in the Arab world and reform of national education and health policies (Sadiki 2000, pp. 73–79).

Consequently, these collective memories within local Rifian activism function as mythomoteurs, grand narratives about an ethnic group’s “special character” and “historical destiny” (Smith 1986, p. 15). These stories were and are accommodated in the autobiographical memories of activists and analytically account for the “double historicity of nations”: they are rooted in memories and traditions, but also always embedded in specific historical-contexts (Smith 2009, p. 30). Both within the context of the memory of the violence committed and in the actual experience of it, this “double historicity” produces mythomoteurs. Approaching these collective memories as mythomoteurs rather than as “false histories” stresses the social dimension at play in the formation of memories (Portelli 1991). Mythomoteurs are firmly grounded in individual experiences. For these memories to survive, they must be externalized in lasting conveyers or media. They need a historical and sociological framework that will distinguish what is memorable from what is forgettable. This process of shifting from memories grounded in individual experiences and communicated in inter-generational settings to an enduring trans-generational memory is marked by the act of re-embodiment or re-mediation (Assmann 2008, pp. 55–56).

In the individual memories of these Rifian activists, *khubz* or “bread” acts as a signifier of balancing relations between leaders and their individual subjects in the Arab world, or “khubzist states” (Sadiki 2000, pp. 135–36). They echo distrust of political power and national

governmental incompetence. Activists frequently referenced 1984–1987 as the *intifādat al-khubz*. The social media lent new relevance to the deaths of Farid Akrouh and Saïd Bodaft during these revolts at the beginning of 2011. Portelli (1991, p. 26), for instance, argues that such events, far from having to be the most dramatic or atrocious in a specific historical context, survive precisely through the meaning that individuals assign to it in the conditions of the present, and not through the nature of the “memory matter” itself. Precisely because memory communicates meaning, it is inherently manipulative. The story of the deaths as told in social media during 2011 was altered. The victims were considered martyrs and young men whose deaths could not be forgotten, their battles examples that needed to be followed. Consequently, the transformations the story of Farid and Saïd underwent in dialogues and in social media are indicative of individuals’ psychological needs to communicate an event they deem “crucial” in interaction with others. The memories serve to help them make sense of *their* history in general, and not just momentarily. They functioned as a way for activists to convey the message of the weight that a local particularly violent history bears on them as actors and agents *in* history.

If memory is intrinsically communicative, “memory matter” survives in its episodic form. Facts and chronology are changed in view of what is functional for the storyteller, and what remains is a symbolic message—their errors have to do with the question as to what the deaths of Farid Akrouh and Saïd Bodaft in 1984–1987 in the Rif mean and for whom they are representative and in which format. The externalization and diffusion of the memories surrounding the deaths of Farid Akrouh and Saïd Bodaft have been inserted into a more stable and cultural memory that is able to exist *outside* its carriers, the activists who witnessed or lived through the actual events of those particular revolts (Assmann 2008). In other words: what was lived has become “historical” and mediated (Halbwachs 1992). The past that was once lived is still “active” or has been re-activated, and thus continuously supports the construction of an identity vis-à-vis the state. It supports the moral claim that aligns with the activists’ message of human rights.

### BEING THERE

The diffusion of these memories is no longer rooted in autobiographical and generational memory alone, but also in lived experience. These experiences have become subject to another, different form or mode of

mnemonic practice. This is evident from the ongoing practice of commemorating the two deaths in social media and during protests in the region itself, e.g. by carrying photographs of the two boys, including during the 2011 “Berber Spring.”

A news item on the Dutch-Moroccan website [nieuws.aithwayagher.nl](http://nieuws.aithwayagher.nl) covering the news from Al Hoceima reported a demonstration organized “against the Moroccan government” that had taken place in early 2011.<sup>2</sup> It stated that citizens from Aith Bouayach, the village from which Farid Akrouah was said to have originated, and Imzouren, the village where he was said to have been murdered by police forces, had gathered to commemorate not only the deaths of the students Farid Akrouah and Saïd Bodaft in 1987, but also the “hundreds” of innocent Rifians killed by Moroccan soldiers in 1959. In addition, the demonstration connected the commemoration of local violence to the current uprising in Tunisia, stating that they also remembered the “dozens of martyrs who were sacrificed in order to make the dictator abdicate.” Accompanying the pictures was a video clip showcasing the civilian gathering, with activists holding up slogans and photographs of Farid and Saïd. The website also posted a memorial note: “Akrouh Farid from Ait Bouayach was tortured to death in 1987 in the principal’s office of the lycée that he attended in Imzouren; his family was not allowed to attend the funeral; his grave was guarded for three months by Moroccan soldiers.” The state had taken away the right to memory and mourning. This explains the connection made with the deaths of 1959. Comparing these two local events to the events in Tunisia in January 2011 drew an analogy with Hassan II as a dictator, while past and present victims of both regimes were depicted as martyrs. Precisely this tradition of opposition against the state and in particular the participation in protest, with the risk of suppression by police and army, is what Yacine intended to inscribe himself into.

The sense of having “been there”—whether “real” or “imagined”—results in the embodiment or corporeality of memory, which in turn authenticates the event even more as a unique, lived experience with the disruptive forces of history (Giesen 2004, pp. 32–36). The activists’ embodied traumatic recall of 1984–1987 thus evoked the more distant, yet still present trauma of 1958–1959, transcending the boundaries of lived experience of one particular generation but also rejecting versions of the past by becoming aware of significant generational-differences (Reulecke 2008, pp. 121–23). Generational memory, as discussed, is built around the “memory matter” of “special” events, often involving some kind of trauma. This form of memory regulates the “memorial

resistance” to the lack of historical truth (Hirsch 2008, p. 121). Hirsch, however, also argued that “postmemory”—essentially a generational concept—is firmly tied to familial memory, precisely because of the family unit’s closeness to the trauma and its scars. This becomes visible in the life stories of Berber activists who migrated to the Netherlands and introduced Yacine to the realm of Berber activism. They, in turn, were confronted with the paradoxical effect of silence that was produced by the corporeal memory of 1958–1959 in a familial context (Hirsch 2002, pp. 76–80).

Aligning with Hirsch’s concept of “postmemory work,” which categorizes all aesthetic genres—literary, poetic, and visual—that facilitate the survival of the previous generation’s memory of suffering in the present one, I argue that, in interviews, activists similarly engaged in “postmemory talk,” essentially signaling their search for inclusion in a memory that exists outside themselves, but keeping sufficient distance to preserve the memory as *other* than the self. The procedure of “postmemory” operates around the suffering of the past that remains to be felt as having a continuous effect on the activists’ present (Hirsch 2008, p. 107).

Family stories pass on ethics and beliefs between generations within the family unit. “Postmemory” thus strengthens continuity and bridges the temporal. It operates in a complex mnemonic mode in which trauma (forgetting) and nostalgia (remembering) are both at play. In a trans-national activism like Berber activism, “postmemory” bridges the spatial distance needed to obtain a sense of community in the experience of displacement and migration while healing the disruptive effects trauma brought upon the generation that lived the traumatic experience in another, “original” place. The procedure of “postmemory” operates around the suffering of the past that remains to be felt as having a continuous effect of the activists’ present (Hirsch 2008, p. 107).

## CONCLUSION

This chapter aimed at showing how traumatic memory, trans-generational traumatization (Berger 2011, p. 11) and both chosen and unchosen traumatic silence in the memories of Rifian activists, on the one hand, and the silence in official, state-directed memory on the other, interacted and connected multiple episodes of violence in the Rif region. These episodes in fact acted as mythomoteurs, grand narratives about the

specificity of the Rifians' place in historical (trans.)-national narratives. Autobiographical, family, and generational memories tied to a specific region, each related to particular historical traumata, propelled activists to engage in Rifian activism in the present. Their memories are closely aligned with discourses on human rights, democratization, and regional autonomy or regional integration of the Rif region in Morocco.

The notion of human rights and democratization informs their claim to a "recovery" of "truth" and "history." Conversely, that same recovery endorses the regionalist project enlisted in Rifian activism. Because memory is both temporally and spatially formatted into meaningful narratives, it is fragile and subject to mediation. In this way, a particular kind and generation of postmemory arose in the Rif; subsequent generations of activists were and are willing to "seek justice" for the wrongdoings of the past, relying on personal and family memories, formatted into one narrative template of violence committed by the state. This chapter thus showed how "memories in the region" were transformed to "regional memories" and gave way to a spatially organized cultural memory that underscores regional identity, not due only to shared memories and frames of meaning, but also to shared memories that convey shared values and norms (compare Erll 2010, p. 313).

In this chapter, I started out from the lived experience of one of those individuals, Yacine. During the years between 1984 and 1987, before Yacine was born and long before the Berber Movement took root in the diaspora, when the founders of the first Berber associations were young adolescents, the "memory matter" of the Bread Riots in Morocco shaped the narration of earlier and future episodes of collective violence in the Rif. Their memories rendered victimization into a story template of Berber opposition to Arab regimes. Memories of the *intifādat al-khubz* echoed distrust of political power and arose out of the unbalanced relationships between the state and the people. The stories about the deaths of two boys, their peers, at the hands of the state epitomized this shared memory. Shared historical-experience and the memory of it encourage generativity. Shared memories about individually lived experiences may thus generate collective meaning.

The formation of such generational memory, or the collective memory that shapes a sense of generational identity and a sense of belonging among Berber activists, also concerned the transmission of an earlier episode of collective violence, not personally experienced, yet transmitted



through family memory: the trauma of 1958–1959. I argued that trauma involves a particular mode of silence caused by the amplification of memory. Those who witnessed the 1958–1959 assaults are, in most cases, already two generations removed from current Berber activists; yet, memories were transmitted between grandparents and parents, though never in public settings outside of the family or among peers. Even though Mohammed VI took the initiative to do away with the wrongdoings of his father, speaking about the events of 1958–1959 remained difficult. Often, older generations refused to talk about the violence they had witnessed or that was committed against them. According to Berber activists, the memories of these victims should be considered a means to an end: their memories entail a transformative power because they made a sacrifice for the region. They are thus regarded not as mere passive victims, their voices unheard or dismissed, because their silence supposedly does not fit the framework of history. Both the 1958–1959 and 1984–1987 episodes function as memories that narrate the defeat of the Rif at the hands of the Moroccan state and that generate political action among younger generations of activists. Self-ascriptions of belonging to “a generation” are constitutive of the imagined community of Rifian activists and guarantee continuity because they also regenerate earlier memories of traumatic experiences. In particular, the male constituents of Rifian activist-generations have contributed to this sense of collectiveness. Their own experiences evoked the trauma of 1958–1959 and/or 1984–1987 and encouraged them to take action, to live the lives of the activists that went before them. Generational memory relies on the “memory matter” of “special” events. This “postmemory” is equally entrenched in family memory.

In Rifian activism, which is a trans-national activism, the memory of violence shared between generations also bridges the spatial distance needed to obtain a sense of community in the experience of displacement. Activists draw on traumatic narratives to represent the past and construct their identities in the present. For Yacine and his peers, traveling to the Rif and taking part in the popular protests of 2011 meant healing the disruptive effects of trauma on the generations that experienced violence in another, “original” place. Yacine was creating new memories based on sacrifice, war, and violence during a period in history that he perceived to be a time of crisis.

## NOTES

1. The author distinguishes between two generations of activists (roughly, one formed during the 1960s and one during the 1980s arising out of the student's movement), though only considering developments in Rabat, the home of some umbrella organizations.
2. Boukidan remembers Rifian victims and supports Tunisia's victims at <http://www.nieuws.aithwayagher.nl>, consulted January 22, 2011.

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